R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 013 609 JC 670 064

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENT AS RELATED TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN JUNIOR COLLEGE.

BY- SHORE, MILTON F. LEIMAN, ALAN H.

PUB DATE 65

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.28 7P.

DESCRIPTORS- *JUNIOR COLLEGES, *PARENT ATTITUDES, PARENT CHILD RELATIONSHIP, ACHIEVEMENT, UNDERACHIEVERS, *PARENT INFLUENCE, *ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, LEICESTER JUNIOR COLLEGE, MASSACHUSETTS,

RESPONSES OF PARENTS TO AN OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETED AT THE TIME OF THEIR SONS' ADMISSION TO LEICESTER JUNIOR COLLEGE WERE EVALUATED IN TERMS OF FIVE HYPOTHESES CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS TO COLLEGE ACHIEVEMENT. PARENTS OF THE GROUP OF ACHIEVERS DIFFERED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THE PARENTS OF UNDERACHIEVERS IN DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR SONS' VOCATIONAL GOALS AND INTERESTS AS WELL AS OF THEIR LIABILITIES AND ASSETS FOR ACADEMIC WORK IN COLLEGE. PARENTS OF ACHIEVERS SAW THEIR CHILDREN AS HAVING SPECIFIC GOALS WHICH REQUIRED ACADEMIC TRAINING, WHILE PARENTS OF UNDERACHIEVERS SAW THEIR SONS AS UNDECIDED OR AS SEEKING GOALS REQUIRING LITTLE ACADEMIC TRAINING. PARENTS OF ACHIEVERS CONSIDERED THEIR SONS' LIABILITIES AND ASSETS IN TERMS OF ACADEMIC QUALITIES, RATHER THAN OF PERSONALITY TRAITS AND SOCIAL ABILITIES. IN INTELLIGENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES, NO DIFFERENCES WERE FOUND BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS OF STUDENTS. THE AUTHORS CONCLUDE THAT FACTORS OTHER THAN ABILITY CAUSE DIFFERENCES IN PRODUCTION OR ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL SITUATION, AND THAT PARENT-SON RELATIONSHIPS MAY BE ONE FACTOR WHICH IS CLOSELY RELATED TO MOTIVATION FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE. (AUTHOR/WO)

ERIC

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

JAN 12 1967

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE

THE JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL EDUCATION
(Volume 33, Number 4, Summer 1965)

ED013609

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENT AS RELATED TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN JUNIOR COLLEGE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

MILTON F. SHORE
ALAN H. LEIMAN
Leicester Junior College
Leicester, Massachusetts [1]

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

MANY STUDIES of achievers and underachievers in college have dealt with the personality characteristics of the students including the students' views of their parents. However, relatively few studies have been done on parental attitudes as related to their child's academic achievement. Those studies that have been reported in this area have, for the most part, focused on the parent's general attitudes toward child rearing (2) or toward education. It has been the rare study that has dealt with the parent's attitudes and perceptions of the specific college student and their relationship to his academic performance.

In a recent review of studies on under and overachievement, Shaw (1: 22) summarized the work on parent-child relationships:

> Not only do they (parents of underachievers) have less education, but their values tend to be either neutral or negative with respect to education, while the parents of achievers tend to value education positively. It has also been shown that the relationship which exists between the underachiever and his parents tends to be a more distant one, psychologically speaking, than that which exists between the achiever and his parents. The parents of achievers also show a greater inclination to push their children toward achievement, not only in school, but in other areas as well.

This study investigated the parental picture of a specific student as related to his performance in junior college. Unlike previous studies the questions used did not attempt to measure general attitudes, but were related to the parental picture of the individual student's interests, plans, assets and liabilities. Also the questions were not structured but were open-ended permitting a wide range of responses of various lengths and quality. It was the quality and nature of the parental responses to these open-ended questions about their child that were evaluated.

PROCEDURE

In order to assist the college in educational planning for the student, Leicester Junior College in 1960 began a program in which, after the applicant was accepted as a student, the parents were sent the questionnaire shown at the end of this article. This questionnaire was to be completed and returned before the student arrived in the Fall.

At the end of the 1960-61 academic year, efforts were made to evaluate the results in terms of the student's success at the school. The distinct differences observed between parental responses to the questionnaire for those who succeeded at the College and those who did not were then formulated as hypotheses and cross validated on the next entering class. The five hypotheses were:

Hypothesis I: In discussing life work and vocational plans of their sons, parents of achievers list and/or specify clearly their vocational job interests and plans. These are areas which require academic training. The parents of underachievers see their sons as having no vocational goals or are vague and unspecific as to their future occupational plans, listing occupations requiring no real academic training. (See Question 2.)

Hypothesis II: The parents of achievers list as one of their son's assets a great deal of drive, a desire to succeed, determination, and/or perseverance while parents of underachievers do not. (See Question 5.)

Hypothesis III: Parents of achievers clearly specify areas of academic interest with academic assets and liabilities stated rather than traits of personality. Parents of underachievers, on the

JC 670 064

EXECUTIVE EDITORS

John Schmid, Professor of Education and Chairman of the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas. *Chairman.*

Philip Lambert, Professor of Educational Psychology and Educational Administration, The University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

L. Joseph Lins, Professor and Coordinator of Institutional Studies, The University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

CONSULTING EDITORS

Terms Expire December 31, 1965

Emmett A. Betts, Research Professor, School of Education, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida.

Herbert S. Conrad, Program Development Officer, Educational Research and Development, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C.

Harl R. Douglass, Director Emeritus of College of Education, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.

Carter V. Good, Dean, College of Education and Home Economics, Teachers College, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Valworth R. Plumb, Chairman, Division of Education and Psychology, University of Minnesota, Duluth, Minnesota.

Helen Thompson, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, Director, Thompson Reading Clinic, Chapman College, Orange, California.

Paul A. Witty, Professor of Education, Director of Psycho-Educational Clinic, School of Education, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

J. Wayne Wrightstone, Assistant Superintendent, Board of Education of the City of New York, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, New York.

Terms Expire December 31, 1966

Harold D. Carter, Professor of Education, University of California, Berkeley, California.

Stephen M. Corey, Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, New York.

Harold A. Edgerton, President, Performance Research, Inc., 1346 Connecticut Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C.

D. Welty Lefever, Professor of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

H. H. Remmers, Professor of Educational Psychology, Director Division Educational Reference, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

Robert L. Thorndike, Chairman, Department of Psychological Foundations and Services, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City, New York.

Ernest R. Wood, Dean of the Faculty, Frederick College, Portsmouth, Virginia.

Terms Expire December 31, 1967

Robert A. Davis, Professor of Educational Research, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee.

John C. Flanagan, President, American Institute for Research, 410 Amberson Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

James R. Montgomery, Director of Institutional Research, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Deobold B. Van Dalen, Professor of Education, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

D. A. Worcester, College of Education, The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.

The Journal of Experimental Education is published at Madison, Wisconsin, four times a year. Price $10 a year, $3 a copy. Second class postage paid at Madison, Wisconsin. Copyright 1964 by Dembar Educational Research Services, Inc. Address all business correspondence care of DERS, Box 1605, Madison, Wisconsin 53701. Send all manuscripts to Prof. John Schmid, College of Education, The University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Published by DEMBAR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH SERVICES, Inc. WALTER FRAUTSCHI, President. Prof. WILSON B. THIEDE, Vice President and Publisher. Prof. CLARENCE A. SCHOENFELD, Assistant to the Publisher. ARNOLD CAUCUTT, Treasurer and Business Manager. JEAN WILLIAMS POTTER, Supervisor of Editorial Services.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Wilson Thiede, publisher Dembar Educational Research Services, Inc. TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

other hand, describe their child's assets for college as sociability, good personality, and the ability to make friends easily with academic areas mentioned only casually or not at all. (See Questions 5 and 6.)

Hypothesis IV: In listing their son's activities, parents of underachievers focus on non-academic areas of achievement such as sports and social activity while parents of achievers focus on academic accomplishments, such as academic honors and awards. (See Questions 3 and 4.)

Hypothesis V: Parents of underachievers seem less interested in answering the questionnaire and answer the questions in a vague unspecific manner with few references to their child by name and little elaboration on points they make. Parents of achievers, on the other hand, seem greatly involved and answer the questions with great detail and seriousness. (See total questionnaire.)

Sample Selection

Leicester Junior College has about 210 students, all males, with 95 percent between the ages of 17 and 21. The school has a state accredited business course and a liberal arts program. Almost all the students are from middle class families. Thus the student body is reasonably homogeneous.

This study was done on freshmen students only. In order to permit a period of adjustment, the grade averages for the second semester were used to select achievers and underachievers. Since some boys with low grade averages dropped out in the first semester, it was felt that this procedure, if anything, would tend to minimize any differences that might exist.

Underachievers and achievers were identified by subtracting the standard scores on the IQ test (Otis Quick Scoring) from the standard scores of the grade averages for the second semester for all freshmen students. The upper and lower quartiles of the differences of the standard scores constituted the two groups [2]. The parental questionnaires of these students were selected from the student's file. Parent's questionnaires on nine achievers and eight underachievers could not be found. The sample, therefore, consisted of parental questionnaires of 19 achievers and 20 underachievers.

Procedure

A psychologist was asked to classify the parental questionnaires into two groups on the basis of the five hypotheses. He was not aware of the aims of the study, nor did he know the student's IQ score, achievement test scores or performance at the college. The questionnaires were randomized each time they were presented to the rater. He was told to evaluate only those responses to the questions noted in the hypothesis and was merely to predict whether the student was an achiever or an underachiever. Clarification questions were answered before the rating was done. A second person, (a social worker) was given the questionnaires to rate to check the reliability of the ratings. The average agreement between the two raters was 84 percent with a range for the five hypotheses of 75-95 percent.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the results of the Chi^2 analyses of the ratings on the five hypotheses. Despite the small sample in the study all the results were in the predicted direction. However, only the results on I and III were significant beyond the .05 level. Thus parents of achievers clearly specify the vocational interests of their children and relate these to academic training while parents of underachievers either see their child as undecided vocationally or as being interested in occupations requiring little academic training. (It should be remembered that the school offers only business and liberal arts programs, not programs in physical education or mechanics, common vocational choices mentioned by parents of underachievers.)

Parents of underachievers also describe their child's assets as being related to personality traits rather than academic areas although the purpose of the questionnaire was clearly to aid the school in the educational planning of the student. (Note the stated aims listed on the questionnaire.) Parents of achievers, on the other hand, clearly specify areas of academic assets and liabilities.

The results on Hypothesis II, although not significant, do suggest that parents of achievers tend to see their children as ambitious, determined, and driven while parents of underachievers do not. It is indeed possible that had the sample been larger the results on Hypothesis II would have reached significance.

A questions arises as to whether or not the differences in responses by the parents might not be based on actual differences in the students. Thus, could it be that the parents' responses are to real differences in ability or level of achievement rather than their interpretation of their children? In order to evaluate this possibility, the IQ scores of the two groups on the Otis Quick Scoring Test were compared. A t-test score of 1.08 had a probability greater than .20, showing no significant difference between the groups. A median test of the percentile ranks on the achievement tests revealed no significant differences between the two groups on the Cooperative English Test (Reading section), and the A. C. E. (Language, Quantitative, and Total). P's on all four tests were greater than .30. In fact, on the A.C.E. Total Score the underachievers were in the direction opposite to that expected, showing a slightly higher median total score than the achievers. Thus, although the parental perceptions of the underachievers and achievers were significantly different, the achievement test level and ability test

levels of the two groups were in no way different. Although there still may be other basic differences in the students, IQ or achievement ability are not the areas in which the differences manifest themselves.

Even with a sample as small as that in this study, our results are consistent with those of previous studies as reported by Shaw (1). Parental attitudes towards their children in academic and vocational areas seem to be significantly related to a student's academic achievement in junior college. Of particular significance is that the parent's perceptions of their children were not based on a realistic appraisal or acknowledgment either of the child's abilities or of his level of achievement as revealed by achievement tests.

The statement by parents of underachievers that their child does not have specific vocational goal direction is consistent with observations that underachievers themselves seem less goal-directed and more undecided about their futures. They have also been noted to focus around the immediate and find it hard to plan for distant goals.

Although we must be careful about inferring a cause and effect relationship, we can speculate about the processes by which the child-parent relationship may operate to affect performance in college. It may be that in some way the formulation of vocational goals and an open concern with academic assets and liabilities may serve to set a standard by which the student measures his success and failure[3]. Mutually satisfying academic and vocational goals are usually worked out by parents and students in planning for a college career. Where these goals are not clear and where academic areas are of less concern than social and personality areas to significant figures such as parents, motivation to achieve in an academic setting may be impaired.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The parental responses to an open-ended questionnaire filled out at the time of their son's admission to a junior college were evaluated for those students who were underachievers and those who were achievers. The parental descriptions of their child's vocational goals and interests as well as their assets and liabilities for academic work in college were significantly different between the two groups. The parents of achievers saw their children as having specific goals which required academic training, while the parents of underachievers saw their children as undecided as to vocational plans or seeking goals that required little academic training. The parents of achievers saw their child's assets and liabilities in terms of academic abilities while the parents of underachievers saw their child's assets and liabilities in terms of personality traits and social ability. There was no difference between the achievers and underachievers in intelligence test performance or performance on achievement tests, although their performance in course work was markedly different.

Therefore, it was clear that the underachievers were learning at a level equivalent to that of the achievers, but because of certain difficulties, were unable to produce or achieve in the school situation. It was suggested that the parent-child relationship may be an important source of this difficulty with parental expectations with regard to academic achievement and parental concern and interest over academic issues a very important factor related to the motivation for high performance. Clearly delineated academic interests and goals worked out in relation to a significant person who is interested in academic areas may serve as a standard for the evaluation by the student of his performance in college, and as a result serve as an important source of motivation for academic success.

QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO ALL PARENTS OF ENTERING STUDENTS*

Parent Check Sheet

The information contributed below will be used by the Dean and the Faculty Advisor in aiding the new student in his academic adjustment at Leicester.

1. In what <u>academic areas</u> (school subjects) has your son shown speci: interest and ability?
2. In what <u>life work</u> or occupations has he shown interest?
3. In what special <u>activities</u> has he shown an interest and taken part?
4. How do you as a parent feel about the above mentioned interests, plans, and activities for your son?
5. List any characteristics which your son posseses which you think will assist him in achieving educational goals at Leicester.
6. List here any characterists which your son may possess which would <u>hinder</u> his progress at Leicester.
7. Is there any special assistance which may be needed by your son while at Leicester?
8. Please give us any additional background as to special accomplishments in any area (awards, offices held, scholarships, recognition, etc.) which may influence the educational plans of your son.
9. Other comments you may wish to make.

(*Words underlined were underlined in the original questionnaire.)

FOOTNOTES

1. Both authors were instructors in Psychology at Leicester Junior College. Dr. Shore is now at the Mental Health Study Center, National Institute of Mental Health. Dr. Leiman is at the Child Guidance Clinic of Greater Bridgeport, Bridgeport, Connecticut. Both authors wish to express their appreciation to Mr. Herman Fisher, Dean, and Dr. Paul Swan, Pres-

ident of Leicester Junior College for their assistance and support in carrying out this study.

2. Originally it was thought the upper quartile might yield a group of so-called "over-achievers". However, it was found that the differences of the standard scores of this group were close to zero, indicating that the group was, in reality, performing in school at a level consistent with their measured ability. Therefore, it was more appropriate to use the term "achievers" to describe this group.
3. It may be suggested that the parents of underachievers are concerned about their child's performance but avoid the academic areas on the questionnaire because of a desire to present their children to the school in a positive light. However, the complete avoidance of academic areas throughout the questionnaire appears to reflect more a disinterest and lack of concern.

REFERENCES

1. Shaw, M. C., "Definition and Identification of Academic Underachievers." in L. M. Miller (Editor) Guidance for the Underachiever With Superior Ability (Bulletin Number 25) Washington D. C., United States Government Printing Office, 1961, pp. 15-30.
2. Teehan, J. E., "Parental Attitudes and College Success." Journal of Educational Psychology, (1963), pp. 104-109.

TABLE 1

CHI SQUARE RESULTS ON THE FIVE HYPOTHESES FOR THE TWO GROUPS*

Hypothesis	X^2	P
Hypothesis I	4.32	.05 > .01
Hypothesis II	2.08	.20 > .10
Hypothesis III	4.32	.05 > .01
Hypothesis IV	.24	not sig.
Hypothesis V	.62	not sig.

*N = 39 d.f. = 1